



## Harold Newland

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*Harold was born in Leichhardt in 1917. After he left school he joined the railways, where he worked for many years as a sheet metal worker. In 1968 he was promoted to Production Control Assistant, and joined the salaried staff. Shortly before his retirement from working life in 1979 he was made Custodian of Plans for the railways. For eleven years, from 1947 to 1958, concurrently with his job with the railways, Harold worked at Luna Park, mainly as Supervising Attendant. These were the most colourful years of his working life. Now retired, Harold lives with his wife at Bateau Bay, NSW.*

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I was born in Leichhardt in 1917, and when I was about four we moved to Annandale, to a house my uncle owned. (He owned half of Annandale). I went to South Annandale Public School, and the first day I went there I beat my mother home, I hated school so much. I went to Leichhardt Technical School and spent twelve months in Leichhardt Trade School in Balmain Road. I used to go to a gymnasium and do weight lifting from when I was 15 till I got married. I'd go with my elder brother. (I had an elder brother, I was second, then there was my younger brother and a younger sister. Late in her life my mother had twins, but they died at birth.)

When I left school at 14 I served my time with James Robertson and Sons in Nelson Street, Annandale. I left them in 1935 because I wasn't earning enough money and started with the Railways as a junior hand. At the railways I was eventually made a sheet metal worker, and I stayed as a sheet metal worker until 1968, when I became a Production Control Assistant. I'd had a few run-ins with the bloke I had to work with, and it was a bit touchy for a while to start with, but after a while we got on OK. I did that job for about twelve years.

We worked on the two and four-car sets. They used to run on the branch lines. We built them and all. When I was Production Control Assistant they'd come in for repair, and we kept a lot of spares, and it was my job, with the materials schedule from the planners, to assemble all the material for the people to do the repairs. There are still some of the two and four-car sets running up in Newcastle on the branch lines. I worked on the *Silver City Comet*, which was the best train that Broken Hill ever had, and the Budd cars were good too, but they scrapped them altogether later on. All their sides were convex - something similar to corrugated iron roofing - but stainless steel, of course. They were beautiful. I don't know why they done away with them.

Eight months before I retired a job came available as Custodian of Plans, which I applied for and got. There were plans and drawings for every item that we had there, and I would file them. If someone wanted one from Blackheath, Parkes - anywhere, they'd get onto me and I'd get the drawings printed at our Head Office and Wynyard and post them off to them. Also, one of my main jobs was, if Newcastle, or Broadmeadow, or any of those places wanted something urgent - especially gearboxes for the two and four-car sets, which used to wear out now and again, and I always had about half a dozen spares. What I would do was get the utility that was at my disposal, race over to Strathfield Station and get it on the Newcastle Express to get it up there quick.

I liked those jobs, but Luna Park was the love of my life. This is how I came to work at Luna Park:

The year I got married, in 1947, we decided to build a house. (I have two grown-up daughters, by the way.) We'd been living with my mother-in-law for about twelve months, but the fact that we didn't own that house put me in an awkward position. Understand? I'd bought a block of land at South Strathfield for 150 pound before we got married. When we got married we didn't have much money, so I decided to try and get another job. A fellow I worked with worked at Luna Park, and one day I asked him if there was any chance that I might get a job there too. You had to be quiet about those things, being with the Railway. (You weren't supposed to have a second job. It was important not to be found out if you did. I was told that if you took on another job on the quiet, never to go off on sick leave, or try to get compensation if you get hurt on that job. I never once went off on sick leave - the most I ever did was put in for a day off without pay now and then when I had to go and help my father with the scrap metal business.)

The season at Luna Park always started on the second Friday night of September. This bloke I worked with told me that they were having a get-together the week before the season opened, but you had to have a letter of invitation to go to it. This bloke organised for him and half a dozen of his mates to chack the gatekeeper and distract his attention so I could slip in unnoticed, which is what I did. The manager was getting together with the owner sorting out all the jobs for the coming season, and there were about a dozen of us standing to one side. The manager said to the charge hand of Coney Island that he wanted a man on the turnstile there, and he had to pick somebody from the group I was with. He came over straight to me. I'd never seen him before, and I don't know why he picked me, but I had a collar and tie on and my shoes were clean and I had my best clothes on. And that's how I got a start at Luna Park. (We moved into the new house we'd built in 1950, and within three years I had it paid off - with the extra money I earned at Luna Park.)

I was only on the turnstile at Coney Island for about a week when they sent me to work up the top of the Jack and Jill, which was a big slippery dip which had just been built. Then the charge hand at Coney Island came up to me one day and told me that the boss was looking for someone to go into the office for three weeks. I stayed there for longer than three weeks as it turned out.

After I'd been relieving there for three weeks the bloke I was relieving came in. I wasn't to let anyone go upstairs - if they did, they had to see me first because upstairs was where the money was. They had three big safes there, two in the office and another one in the flat where the caretaker and his wife lived. (It was a beautiful flat, very well-appointed. I only ever saw it once when I went in there with the boss when we needed some change.) Anyway, he went up to see the boss, and I didn't see him come down again, but a little while later the boss came down to me and told me that he wasn't coming back and offered me the job. Apparently this bloke had been caught swindling some big stores over radiogram cabinets, and the boss was very firm that nobody mixed up with the courts or the police should work there.

I had to look after the bundy system. The boss was very cranky on fellows bundying their mates on. And I had to worry about the girls. They had a box office on the Midway across from my office, and I had to watch them like a hawk, especially when we had brown-outs which were pretty common at the time, to make sure nobody tried to steal money from them or anything like that. I looked after lost property, and any trouble - arguments over people getting short changed - you name it, it did it. I also had to pay the men their wages on Fridays, and I handled all money on Sundays, Christmas Day, New Year's Day and Good Fridays. And accidents. Whenever anyone got injured there it was always a hush-hush job - they didn't want it getting around when there was an accident.

I also controlled the music, and I was the one who answered the phone. All phone calls had to come through me, and often I'd have to cover for the boss, who played up a bit. While I worked there I worked as Ronald Newland, not Harold, because I didn't want them to know I worked on the Railway as well. I had a big field telephone, too, where I could get on to the Big Dipper, the Dance Hall, the River Caves, Coney Island, the ambulance room, the front gate, and the Tumble Bug. I had a pretty good coverage. It was terrific telephone - never had any trouble with it.

Our wages was 14/6 a night, from half past seven till eleven o'clock, and I got an extra two and sixpence on top of that, which was pretty good money then. If I'd worked there all the year round I would have earned more money there than I did on the Railway. Just after I got that job we got more big rises through the Cost of Living adjustments, so I just happened to be there at a nice time. They had another funny way of paying, too. We'd get a bonus every New Year. The boss would give me a list of about twelve men - none of the women - and he got me to line the men up in order, and I had to send them up to him one by one. The first time this happened I didn't know what was going on, and I was last on the list. When it was my turn I went up and he gave me five pound in an envelope - no tax, see. We used to get a bonus after Christmas, after Easter, and when we closed at the end of the season.

The man next in charge after the boss was the best tradesman I've ever seen in my life. He knew everything. He was an electrical engineer by trade, but he could turn his hand to anything, and do it well. And he was a good bloke as well.

The charge hand on the River Caves also worked on the railways as a ganger down at Eveleigh, but we never spoke to each other about the Railways. See, it gets around. There were a lot of railwaymen worked there - railwaymen and bank clerks - probably because they were lowly-paid. Anyway round about the November or December of the first year I worked there he rang me up and said they had trouble at the River Caves. I got straight onto the redcoats - (the patrolmen, or "bouncers"), and got six of them up there. Then I told the manager, and he rushed down. (The River Caves were just opposite my office). As he arrived a sailor came up to me and asked what was going on and I said it was a few of his lot playing up. "It's not us." he said, "You know who it is? It's Prince Phillip!" And it was! I rushed him across to tell the manager, and he got onto the redcoats and told them to leave everyone alone. Now that man did a lot of damage in there. It cost 2,600 pound to put it right. There were six of them in the boat, and they got out amongst the displays and started kicking them down and everything. Must have had too much to drink. And that was the end of it. And I decided that I got the five pound bonus for being wide-awake when this happened.

One of the bouncers we had there was Tommy Burns' youngest brother. He was a welterweight, and a very nice fellow. He handled his hands very good - didn't belt anybody or anything like that. He tried hard not to. They had to use force a lot of times, and some of those times the bouncers themselves had started it all off. There was one of the bouncers there played first grade rugby union for St George, and I thought he used his hands a bit too much. I was cranky on that sort of thing. I reckoned that most of the time, if they had trouble, the thing to do was to get them out of the place as quietly as possible and just forget about it. But he was a bit too ready to be rough too quickly, I thought, and so were some of the others.

A bloke called Sam Marshall wrote a book about Luna Park recently, and he came up here and talked to me for four hours. I've lectured about my time there at various clubs around the place, Probus Clubs, Lions Clubs... well, not "lectured". I'm only a talker, not a lecturer. I'm uneducated. I only ever passed the QC, and how I ever passed that I'll never know.

One day around 1950 I'd finished all my sheets for the attendance, wages and all that - I had log books I had to check to make sure nothing was wrong, like light bulbs to replace or anything like that - and I'm standing out on the step, just watching the people and keeping my eye on the three women in the box office. Something caught my attention and I looked up, and there on the top of the Big Dipper was our maintenance fitter flashing his torch. Every hour the fitter had to go around with his torch to make sure none of the dogs holding the track was loose or anything. I've talked to him about this since, but he says he can't remember this. (Everyone had a torch to use anywhere it was dark - that was another of the things I had to look after, issuing them). As soon as I saw the torch flashing I rushed straight in to the chap running the Big Dipper and got him to stop it straightaway. When it stopped there was a car sitting right up the top, just ready to come down the first drop. Once it comes down the first drop you can't stop it - it freewheels all the way till it comes in to the station where the bloke on the brakes can brake it. Then I rang the ambulance man (who was a painter on the Railways. The charge hand on the Big Dipper was a crane driver on the Railway at Eveleigh, too.) The ambulance man had a son worked on the "Duck Sweetie" gathering up the balls, and he was an ambulance man too. He was the number one. Next thing I did was to ring the manager and tell him something was wrong. He shot down. Then I got in touch with the head patrolman and sent two

of them up there (I told them to make sure they walked, not run, so they wouldn't alarm the crowd or anything), and they went up there. I still didn't know what had happened.

The next thing the manager rings up: "Ron, ring the Mater for an ambulance". We used to supply all the tents, and tables and all the prizes (mostly rubbish) for the Mater's annual hospital fete, so we had strength there, and the ambulance was down in about five minutes. When people saw the ambulance driving away and asked me why it had come I just told them that a woman took a fit.

What happened was that two fellows had got on the last seat on the Dipper, and somehow they'd managed to squirm out from under the bar that keeps you locked in, and got on the outside of it and hung on. When the Dipper went whoosh! like that, they went up in the air and down. One fellow landed on the rails, and the other landed in the garden. There was blood everywhere, and they got the bloke off the rails and dragged him into the shed. The jack of all trades around the place got some water and washed the blood off the rails, and away went the Dipper again. The ambulance man told me afterwards that as soon as he saw him lying there he said to another fellow, "Oh. He's dead." And as soon as he said it, the injured bloke said, "No, I'm not."! I never heard what happened to him after that, but we got out of that all right. One of the owners of Luna Park came up from Melbourne soon afterwards, and he thanked me for my part in it (that was the only time he said a kind word to me), but it was really the fitter who should have got the most thanks.

This owner who lived most of the time in Melbourne, whenever he visited he would make me turn the music up. As soon as I turned the music up, people from North Sydney would start complaining. I never got a complaint about the noise of the Dipper - it was always the music. I was there one night when this owner from Melbourne came in, and he done his block. He dragged me by the ear out to listen to the music, and he wanted me to turn it up louder. I told him that if we kept turning it up we'd get complaints from the Council. "Ron," he said, "you are here to look after the music. I'll handle the Council." So I turned the music up. As soon as the music went up, the manager knew this bloke was visiting! Anyway, in the end I beat him. The ferries that ran from Circular Quay to Luna Park were subsidised by Luna Park - Hegarty's ferries they were called. It finished up that if the ferry skipper saw this Melbourne bloke on the wharf he'd sneak in and ring me up, and I'd turn the music up, and soon as he'd gone I'd turn it down again.

We used to get to take home some bits and pieces of the stock that they used for prizes in the side-shows. One time the boss offered me some toothpaste - I ended up with two boxes of it, at two shillings a tube. Or we'd get some of the mini crumble bars. My wife used to bring my children out to Luna Park a lot - they loved the place, probably because they always had a crumble bar or a bag of chips to eat. All the men used to know them, and keep an eye on them as they raced about the place. My wife thought at one stage that she'd like to work at Luna Park too, and asked me if I thought I could get her something part-time. The policy at the time was that they would not employ husband and wife together, but I asked him anyway. He said No.

There was always trouble in the dance hall - lots of fights. Often it was egged on by the girls, too. There were some rough girls went there, but there were some nice ones too. You weren't supposed to have drink in the dance hall, but they used to smuggle it in, and that was half our battle. If you were drunk you weren't allowed in the Park, and the redcoats would line up and check all the people

coming in, and anyone obviously drunk would be tossed out.

The leader of the band and I got on very well, but he had a lot of girlfriends, and he also had three wives in his time. One night he'd get me to get some free tickets for one of his girlfriends, then the next week he'd go to the boss for them - he had that many! He came to me once when he was having trouble with the bouncer that used to get in the middle of the floor and keep people under control. Apparently he was touching the girls up, and when one of them slapped his face he hit her. He was a nasty piece of work. I went upstairs and saw the boss, and mentioned it to him. It was just before we closed for the season, and then when we re-opened the next season the bouncer didn't come back.

The next man they got to do that bouncer's job was a VC winner. It was the worst place to put him. He was drinking too much, and he was down there pushing the girls around, pushing sailors and shouting at them - absolutely disgraceful. The band leader complained to the boss about him, but the boss just told him to worry about playing his saxophone. But after that season the VC didn't come back. The next we know the papers are carrying a story about how Luna Park had sacked a VC - he'd gone to the papers about it. Soon afterwards a couple of reporters from the papers came to see the boss about him being sacked, and after that nothing more appeared in the papers about it. He was a bastard, though.

At one stage we had *The Great Berosini* - he was a wire walker, and he rode a bike along the wire rope as well. He did a terrific job, but his wife, who was a nice style of a woman, used to play up to the men around the place while he was up doing his act. (She never talked to me. Maybe I was an ugly looking bugger, but I was glad she kept away, to tell you the truth.) The boss used to have put a whisky into Berosini to get him to go up and do his job. He was terrific, but in the end the boss was glad when his contract was up, he was so much trouble.

There was a girl used to spend a lot of time in the dance hall named Shirley Butler. She was only short, but well-developed and she was beautiful. But she had a nasty tongue on her and I maintained that they should have barred her from going in, she was that bad. I caught her and another girl one night outside the ambulance room with their blouses up measuring each other's bust! (They weren't "funny" women, in case that's what you're thinking.) I didn't want to have anything to do with her! When I told the ambulance man what was going on he sent me out by the back door and I don't know what happened after that.

One night a bundle of letters addressed to Shirley Butler were handed in that had been found. They were all opened, so I read them. Holy smoke they were hot! It was about a sailor who was going to get them a room when he came ashore and she had to get enough food for four days because she wasn't going to get outside - the words, everything was in it. I didn't know what to do, so I bundled them up and put them in my cupboard. Then I sighted her, and told her I had the letters, and would she come in and pick them up. But she never came, and two nights later she was found murdered in Waverton. I went home and I kept thinking about these letters, so I rang the manager up at his home and told him about them. He asked me where they were and I told him. The boss contacted me that night to say that the detectives would be down to see me about the letters. When I went to get them they were gone! The manager and I were the only ones that knew they were there, so he must have taken them. I rang him to tell him they were gone, and he had nothing much to say about it, except to wait for the detectives. I just had to tell them they were gone. I didn't mention having told the boss, and they just said "Bad luck." The case was dropped a few months

later. It was nasty.

I only went into each of the shows about once - I never had enough time!

In the matinees, especially at holiday times, we had a fellow that used to walk around on stilts. The matinees were subsidised by Aeroplane Jelly and we used to play that Aeroplane Jelly song all the time. He was good on the stilts, and he used to throw balloons and rattles and things to the kids. He used to do a bit of a dance on the stilts - gee he was good, but one day a gust of wind blew him over and he broke a leg and I never saw him again. The kids used to rave over him!

I was asked to give a bit of a talk at the launching of Sam Marshall's book about Luna Park, when I got invited to be at the opening of the new Luna Park a few years ago. I told that story about the stilt walker. The other story I told was about an old lady that used to come, and how I was ashamed of what I said to her. This small little old lady, all dressed in black, used to come to the Promenade concerts. She had button-up shoes and would have been eighty. She'd come and sit down on one of the seats to listen to the promenade concerts on Saturday afternoons, then she'd go back home. I used to wave to her, and it finished up she'd always come past and say hello to me on her way home. One day she came in, and in the course of our conversation she said to me, "I've never had a cigarette, and I've never had a drink, and I've never had a man." I looked at her, and I said, "Well, there's plenty of good tunes been played on an old fiddle." Then she told me that she was the youngest of eight children, that she had wonderful parents and sisters and brothers, but she knew she'd never have a husband because she was one of the worst epileptics there is. When her parents died her brothers and sisters looked after her, but in the end she got a room up in Alfred Street, and managed to look after herself, and coming to hear the band was her only form of entertainment. I felt ashamed of myself for saying what I did. After that I made sure she got the best seat every Sunday.

Bea Miles used to come in and drive me mad. All she wanted to do was go upstairs. I had to push her one day - swore at her and all, trying to keep her from going upstairs. We had another old lady that used to come - I didn't mind her, but she smelled like she'd never had a bath in her life, and she had one of those old coats with a fur collar on it on a summer's day, and an old-fashioned hat. She always had a bundle of newspapers under her arm. We'd put up with her. But then she'd put the newspapers down somewhere while she looked around, and the wind would come and blow the papers all over the place and we'd have to get somebody to go around and pick 'em all up. We got fed up with her. She was said to be the retired headmistress of the Methodist Ladies' College - used to sleep in Randwick tram depot. We put up with her for quite a while. What could you do? The poor woman.

We had another woman there who had a sort of monkey circus. A few monkeys and a few birds and a dog. She used to perform with them as a distraction. The men had a stopwork meeting and went and saw the manager about the way she treated those animals. He said to let her go till her contract ran out and we never had her back again.

There was a bloke called Webb that they brought out from America. He'd climb a big ladder and dive into a shallow tank from really high up. But I heard that when he went back to America he got killed doing that job. He must've slipped or done something wrong.

And we had a bloke who did a Houdini act. They'd put him in a box and lock the box up and put him in a big tank of water, and he wouldn't come out of the water for at least five minutes. One day I got my assistant to watch the box and I got up on top of the Jack and Jill, went up the back way, and peeked around the corner where I had a good view of this bloke in the tank. What he did, he had a tube out the side of the box, and he'd be breathing air through it. I was up there watching him, but he never knew that I was there.

We used to have teams of axemen come out too. They'd come and do woodchop exhibitions. One of the axemen who came out one time I nearly fainted when I saw him, because he worked at the Railways in the boiler shop! We used to chat together later on, but neither of us ever mentioned doing the extra work at Luna Park. Even though you weren't allowed to have another job if you worked at the Railways, a lot of them used to work as taxi drivers, or at the races, or behind the bar. You wouldn't know what they did.

A girl came looking for a job there one time. She was a fine looking girl and the boss put her on straightaway. She went on one of the rides selling tickets the first night. When they finished a shift they had to fill out a slip showing what numbers their tickets finished on, and how much money they paid in. They didn't want the girls carrying too much money at the desk, so a man with a big vest with a coat over it used to go round and pick up the little leather bags with the money in it about three or four times each night - accompanied by two of the redcoats. Being the first night, this new girl didn't know how to fill the pink slip out, and I went over to help her. When we finished for the night we both went to get the ferry together.

As we were going down the steps she fell down, and I picked her up. As I picked her up I grabbed her across the chest - I don't know how it happened. Well, it worried me. I didn't tell my wife. I came home that night and it worried me all night. When she came in the next morning I showed her how to bundy on, and I said to her, "I wish to apologise for what I did to you last night. I'm very sorry, and I've been worried about it because I didn't want to offend you." She said, "What'd you do to me?" "Well," I said, "when you fell over and I picked you up my hands went where they shouldn't have gone." "Oh, that's alright," she said, "would you like me to fall over again?" Later, it turned out that she was having a very hot affair with one of the other blokes that worked there - I'd got him the job there. He started taking her home every night, and he was married with three children. They kept on with it and in the finish he got divorced from his wife over it. That kind of thing was happening all the time.

There used to be an old Dutch submarine moored next to the Park. I was there when it came there. They bought it lock stock and barrel, and when they hooked it up we never had a brown-out again. They used the generators in it to power all the Luna Park lights - it supplemented the two generators we already had.

There was always a maintenance man on of a night-time - usually a fitter or an electrician. On big holidays or big nights we'd have both. They'd go around all the time seeing that everything was going alright. If a charge-hand saw that a globe was out somewhere, they'd write it in the Log Book so it would be fixed when the electrician came in the next day.

I used to work out at the Royal Easter Show for Luna Park, too. They'd have a car there ready for me when I knocked off work there in the daytime to get me back to Luna Park for the night-time. They used to have the motor bike rider on the Wall of Death out at the Showground and the bloke that used to do it was

really good. But there was something fishy went on, and he went home one night, had a row with his wife, then got into bed and Bang! - shot himself!

I've been to the new Luna Park twice, but it's not the same as it used to be. The romance is not there. I wasn't there when there was the fire in the ghost train. That was well after my time, but I did have a connection with it in a sort of a way.

My father was a second hand dealer in brass and copper and that. I was a Director of his company, and when Glen Davis was closed down we got the contract for all the scrap metal from there. Amongst the scrap was twenty brand-new fire extinguishers - never been used, never even been filled up. I was talking to the boss at Luna Park one night and mentioned to him that we had these extinguishers and he ended up buying them. He had them checked out and filled up. They were the old-fashioned ones made out of copper and all riveted. Some of them were put into the Ghost Train, but that was in about 1952, so who knows what sort of condition they were in when the Ghost Train burnt down.

In my time, before the charge hand on the Ghost Train knocked off, he had to light up the place and go round and make sure no-one was in there. Three times while I was there there'd been people locked in. The watchman would come and tell me. I never reported it to the manager because the charge hand would have got the sack. We're all out there trying to earn extra money with two jobs and it would have meant the sack for him, so I never reported it, but I did have a go at the charge hand.

All my holidays that I got from the Railways I worked, quite voluntarily, at Luna Park. So I didn't get away for a proper holiday for years and years. (That was one of the reasons my wife got on my back to leave off working there in the end.) As a result of having the two jobs I didn't see my family all that much as they were growing up, either.

You ask me which aspects of the Luna Park job made it so enjoyable. Well, I met so many people. I met some good men there - geez I met some good men there! And women. I liked the people aspect of it. Years later, Edna and I were back at Luna Park for a visit, and she asked me if I'd like to go back and work there again. I told her that just Friday and Saturday night would suit me. I went over to the Manager and asked him if there'd be any chance of coming back part-time and he went away to see, but came back and said they couldn't. But looking back later I realised that it was silly of me to think of doing that because by then I was too old - but I would have loved it, though.

I was at Luna Park for eleven years, and left there in 1958. I used to work, with my brothers, helping my father with the scrap metal business from time to time, and my father arranged for me to get a new car through the company (a 1956 FE Holden). Then my father won a big prize in the Tattersall's Melbourne Cup and divided it up amongst us children. After that my wife persuaded me to leave Luna Park. I would have liked to have stayed. It was more than just the money. I was in everything, I got good money, I got the best conditions in the place. I got everything I wanted there. I had a good job there, and I was happy with the job.

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I stayed with the Railways till I turned sixty. Then I left and dabbled in shares and things - I tried all roads. (In fact, I had to sell some shares to buy that new car out there. I shouldn't have, but I did. That's just me.) When I left the Railways I had

fifteen months long service leave up my sleeve, and three lots of annual leave. I used to work my annual leave because they didn't have anyone to take my place. I took the job as Custodian of Plans before I left because it was about two pound a week more, and that increase went on all the long service leave and holidays that I'd accumulated.

Luna Park was my favourite, but I liked all the jobs I did. The best job I had with the Railways was as Production Control Assistant because I had a truck, I had three blokes working for me, and I used to go all over Chullora with this truck. I had access to everywhere. I was the only one in the office who had one. I wasn't allowed to drive it, though - I had a driver. That was a union demarcation ruling.

I had to take orders from sub-foremen and foremen. I had one foreman and about five sub-foremen to answer to. There was one sub-foreman I was in good with, because if he went off early, say, on a Friday, I'd get the truck driver to take him to the station. But I done that for anybody - I could get away with that. But this day this bloke came up to me and asked me to write out a yellow advice slip for something or other he wanted, but I told him it would put me in an awkward position if I did, and I refused. He went over and complained to his sub-foreman, and the sub-foreman came to see why I wouldn't do it. I explained the position, and he said to me, "Well, put it this way. You take orders from me, don't you? Well I'm ordering you to do it." So I said, "In that case it's alright then," and I wrote out the slip for this other fellow. Two of my blokes were there as witnesses, so if anything had gone wrong he was gone, not me.

Another fellow came up to me one day and said he wanted a sheet of rubber about three foot wide, a sixteenth of an inch thick, and about thirty feet long. It was for some special job or other. I had to get it bought in from private enterprise. This other bloke saw the roll and said he wanted to take the lot home with him. I told him I couldn't let him have it, but that I'd give him any that was left over from the job it was bought in for. The next day the whole roll was gone. I went over to this bloke and accused him, but he denied it. I know it was him because a couple of the other fellers told me. I didn't know what to do, so I went over to my boss and told him what had happened, and he just rang and ordered another roll.

Mind you, I done plenty of foreign orders myself. I used to make baking dishes. We used to have that many sheets of eight by four aluminium to use with the two and four car sets - (they were made out of aluminium), and I used to use the leftover bits to make baking dishes or whatever it was that people wanted. Everyone that worked with me had a baking dish!

We had a foreman we used to call Cranky Jack. He was a gentleman and a half. I dunno why he was called Cranky Jack because I never see him do anything cranky in his life. He stood by his men, and people liked to work for him. He was an exceptionally good fellow. He retired up here to Tascott, and one weekend he came out here to see me - this is while I'm still working for the Railways. He told me he wanted me to get him a box of torch batteries. I went to see the bloke who had taken over his job, and told him what Jack wanted, but that I'd have to book them out to his section. He said that was OK. I always used to keep myself covered and get everything in writing and official. I even done jobs like that for the manager. I didn't have any choice.

I liked my job at the Railways, too. Being on the salaried staff after I was made Production Control Assistant was a whole new era for me. It kept me going, like. There was always something to do - something to chase up. I worked harder at

that job that I did when I was on the bench. I was quite happy to go to work. And I've been very lucky in that I've hardly ever been sick in my life. It never bothered me that I had to get up early to start work. I suppose you could say that work was the main part of my life. And while I was doing the two jobs, my wife Edna did everything at home. I didn't have to do anything. I'd get home at quarter past four from the Railways, then a mate would pick me up at five to seven and we'd both go off to Luna Park to work. I'd get home about half past eleven. Then up again the next morning early. (I think that was one of the reasons I got on so well with everybody when I was at Luna Park - I never done my block with anybody because I was too tired!)

There was no union to join for Luna Park, of course, but in the Railways I started off in the ARU, then I joined the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, then the Salaried Officers when I became Production Control Assistant. I wasn't especially active in the union, but I believe in unions. I think you've got to have them. But I think they're doing the wrong thing now with all this collective bargaining. We're going back to the way they work in the Asian countries, in my opinion.

I finally retired from the Railways in November 1979. I left the job on the Friday and we moved straight up here on the Saturday! On my retirement on the Friday they gave me a battery charger and another sixty dollars that they'd collected, and I was very happy about that. That was from the wages staff. Then the Salaried Officers gave me a send-off at the local hotel and shouted me lunch and all that. Then the ones that weren't there gave me another send-off at Punchbowl Masonic Club - so I got three send-offs, really, and I was very happy with that. And when we left Strathfield to move up here, we were given a terrific send-off by our neighbours there. It was a surprise party they'd all set up, and it was a wonderful send-off. We were pretty proud about that happening. Edna's still got the vase upstairs that they gave to us and she wouldn't give that to anybody!

They gave me a send-off when I left Luna Park too, some years before. They collected money and gave me something, but I can't remember what it was, now.

Once I'd retired, I really wanted to go back to work. I hated retirement. There's a bloke who used to live nearby who worked as a planner at Eveleigh, and he nearly went stark raving mad when he retired. It took me six months, easy, to get over it. I had to work out a new way of life. We'd go swimming every day, and I still do my lawns - I weed the lawns and that takes a long time. I'd never go back to work now. Once I settled here I joined everything - in fact I'm about to join another club now.

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*Recorded November 21 and 27, 1995.*